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Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PALERMO 0659

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MILI, IT
SUBJECT: BIO COMMENTARY ON NEW ITALIAN DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI

1. I HAVE KNOWN ATTILIO RUFFINI SINCE 1971 WHEN HE WAS A MID-LEVEL SPOKESMAN FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S DOROTEO (THEN PICCOLI-RUMOR) FACTION. THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE OFFERED TO SUPPLEMENT OTHER REPORTING ON HIM.

2. BORN IN MANTOVA OVER 51 YEARS AGO, RUFFINI SPENT HIS EARLY YOUTH AND THE WAR YEARS IN THAT AREA WHERE HE PARTICIPATED IN THE CATHOLIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT. IMPRISONED IN VERONA BY THE GERMANS FOR HIS WORK IN THE RESISTANCE, RUFFINI ONCE TOLD ME HE FELT HE OWED A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE U.S. ARMY FOR LIBERATING HIM UPON THE FALL OF THAT CITY IN 1945. FOR THIS AND FOR WHAT IS CLEARLY A GENUINE IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PRINCIPLES WE ESPOUSE, RUFFINI IS VERY FAVORABLY INCLINED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES.

3. A PRODUCT OF MILAN'S CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY YOUTH MOVEMENT, RUFFINI WAS FIRST ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT FROM PALERMO IN 1963 AND HAS BEEN RETURNED TO PARLIAMENT IN THE THREE SUBSEQUENNT ELECTIONS WITH AN CONFIDENTIAL

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INCREASING NUMBER OF PREFERENTIAL VOTES (CA. 110,000 IN 1976). ALTHOUGH A NATIVE OF LOMBARDY, RUFFINI SOUGHT ELECTION IN SICILY'S WESTERN DISTRICT BECAUSE OF THE SIGNIFICANT POWER WIELDED HERE BY HIS UNCLE, THE LATE CARDINAL ERNESTO RUFFINI, WHO SERVED AS ARCHBISHOP OF PALERMO FROM 1945 TO 1967.

4. WHILE IT IS OCCASIONALLY ARGUED LOCALLY THAT HE IS NOT

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"SICILIAN-ENOUGH", RUFFINI HAS BECOME ADEPT AT LOCAL POLITICS
AND THE"CLIENTELISMO" WHICH IS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE THEREOF.
HIS OPPORTUNITIES IN THIS LATTER AREA HAVE STEADILY IMPROVED
WITH SUCCESSIVE APPOINTMENTS AS UNDERSECRETARY IN THE EDUCATION
AND TREASURY MINISTRIES, AS DC NATIONAL VICE-SECRETARY, AS
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND INTERIM MERCHANT MARINE MINISTER,
AND NOW AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE. AS TRANSPORT MINISTER, RUFFINI
CONTINUED ACTIVE CULTIVATION OF HIS SICILIAN ELECTORATE,
SPENDING ALMOST EVERY WEEKEND IN PALERMO DEALING WITH LOCAL DC
AFFAIRS, RECEIVING THE PARTY FAITHFUL, JOB-SEEKERS, ETC. -
ESSENTIALS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SICILIAN POLITICIAN. TO EXERCISE THESE
FUNCTIONS, RUFFINI MAINTAINS HOMES IN BOTH PALERMO AND ROME;
AND HIS WIFE, A NATIVE SICILIAN, FREQUENTLY VISITS PALERMO TO
HANDLE FAMILY AFFAIRS AND TO HELP SUPERVISE HER HUSBAND'S
LOCAL POLITICAL STAFF.

5. MRS. RUFFINI IS THE DAUGHTER OF GIUSEPPE LA LOGGIA,
HIMSELF A DC DEPUTY FROM WESTERN SICILY, AND CURRENTLY THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE CHAMBER'S BUDGET COMMITTEE. A FANFANIANO,
LA LOGGIA IS THAT FACTION'S CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY
OF THE BANK OF SICILY - A POSITION WHICH HE ACTIVELY, IF
QUIETLY, SOUGHT AND ONE FOR WHICH HIS SON-IN-LAW HAS DEPLOYED
HIS OWN CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL WEIGHT - SO FAR, WITHOUT SUCCESS.
THE RUFFINIS HAVE FIVE CHILDREN, THE YOUNGEST OF WHICH IS A
BOY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. HIS MOTHER HAS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED
TO ME HER INTEREST IN HAVING HIM STUDY AT AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC
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BOY'S SCHOOL IN ROME.
COLLINS

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Message Attributes

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